IN 5 MONTHS ... TIME RUNS OUT!

NEW AVENGERS

MARVEL

HICKMAN
DEODATO
MARTIN

028

PREVIOUSLY

WELL, BRUCE, IN MY DIMENSION MY TEAMMATES LOBOTOMIZED ME. I NO LONGER ACCESS THE EMOTIONAL CENTERS OF MY BRAIN.

ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR CONDITION?

YES. I'M A SOCIOPATH.

YOU THINK THAT'S A PROBLEM? I REMEMBER WHAT WE USED TO DO WHEN WE LOST CONTROL, WHEN--

WHACK!

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU. SOMEWHERE DEEP DOWN, YOU STILL GET ANGRY. DON'T YOU, BRUCE?

I MISS YOU, SUE.

I THINK WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME, REED. IF WE'RE GOING TO DO SOMETHING, IT MUST BE SOON.

SHANG WENT TO THE KOBE GENESIS SITE, BUT INSTEAD OF RESISTING THE GENESIS MATTER, HE SUBMITTED.

BY DOING SO HE GAINED THE SITE'S POWER. THE POWER OF REPLICATION.

AND NOW A MAN HAS BECOME AN ARMY.

WE'VE TRIANGULATED THEIR SIGNAL, THE ILLUMINATI ARE IN CADIZ.

OKAY.

LET'S GO GET THEM.

AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D., THIS IS ***THE AVENGERS*** ORDERING YOU TO STAND DOWN.

S.H.I.E.L.D. AVENGERS

STEVE ROGERS | HAWKEYE | MARIA HILL | WAR MACHINE | INVISIBLE WOMAN | CAPTAIN AMERICA | CAPTAIN MARVEL

THE ILLUMINATI

BEAST | HULK/ DOC GREEN | REED RICHARDS | BLACK BOLT | BLACK PANTHER

CAPTAIN BRITAIN | AMADEUS CHO | IRON MAN | DOCTOR STRANGE

NEW AVENGERS

SUNSPOT | CANNONBALL | SMASHER | MANIFOLD | BLACK WIDOW

SPIDER-WOMAN | SHANG-CHI | VALIDATOR | POD | ZEBRA KIDS

MULTIVERSAL AVENGERS

HYPERION | ODINSON | STARBRAND | NIGHTMASK | ABYSS | EX NIHILO

THE CABAL

NAMOR | THANOS | BLACK SWAN | TERRAX

MAXIMUS | PROXIMA MIDNIGHT | CORVUS GLAIVE

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"YOU CAN'T WIN" PART II

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CADIZ, SPAIN.
THE AIRSPACE ABOVE AN ILLUMINATI SAFEHOUSE.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING...

WHY IN THE WORLD WOULD SOMEONE AS HANDSOME AS I EVER BOTHER TO STICK THIS GLORIOUS MUG IN THE MIDDLE OF WHAT IS, NO DOUBT, A VERY PERSONAL AND VIOLENT AFFAIR.

WELL, STEVE... IT'S A QUESTION THAT HAS A VERY SIMPLE ANSWER.

IT'S LOVE.

I JUST LOVE THE IDEA OF THE AVENGERS. THE MIGHTIEST OF THE MIGHTY COMING TOGETHER TO ACCOMPLISH SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE THINGS. A GROUP COMMITTED TO PROTECTING THE EARTH WHILE PUTTING ASIDE ALL THEIR PERSONAL DIFFERENCES.

SO, I HAD TO ASK MYSELF... ARE WE FACING AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK? UH-HUH. CHECK. IS IT A LARGE ENOUGH THREAT THAT IT REQUIRES OUR PROTECTING THE ENTIRE PLANET? ABSO-FREAKING-LUTELY.

FINALLY, ARE WE PUTTING ASIDE OUR PERSONAL DIFFERENCES IN ORDER TO DO SO? NO. YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS IN HIDING MOST CERTAINLY ARE NOT.

WHICH IS WHERE WE COME IN...AND WE AVENGERS EXPECT A LOT BETTER THAN WHAT WE'VE BEEN SEEING OUT OF OUR FELLOW BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

SO, WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE NOW IS AN IMMEDIATE STOP TO THE FIGHTING AND A START TO THE FIGURING THIS THING OUT. NOW...ARE YOU GONNA DO THAT, STEVE?

OR AM I GONNA HAVE TO--

CLICK!

MARIA, I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THE GREATEST THREAT THE AVENGERS HAVE EVER FACED IS HEROES WHO LOVE TO HEAR THEMSELVES TALK.

NO COMMENT, SIR.

CLICK!

GIVE US AN UPDATE, RHODEY.

I'M IN THE ZONE, STEVE, BUT UNFORTUNATELY I'M ALSO DOWN TO MY LAST WAVE OF WAR MACHINES.

SO I'M ALMOST DONE AND WILL CERTAINLY BE USELESS AGAINST AN ADDITIONAL THREAT. IF YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING UP YOUR SLEEVE, NOW'S THE TIME.

THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I WAS THINKING.

MARIA?

ON IT.

DIRECTOR HILL TO DECK COMMAND...

"DEPLOY THE PACKAGE."

OKAY, IT'S TIME.

LET'S GO.

YOU SHOULDN'T BE DOING THIS.

IT'S WRONG.

ORDERS ARE ORDERS, PAL. AND IF YOU DON'T MIND ME SAYING...

IF YOU REALLY FELT THAT WAY, I THINK YOU'D BE A LITTLE MORE OUTRAGED.

I DON'T REALLY HAVE A CHOICE IN THE MATTER.

WELL, US EITHER.

OFF YOU GO.

HELLO, DOCTOR, YOU MUST BE GETTING TIRED OF SITTING IN THAT CELL ALL DAY, EVERY DAY.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE A TRIP? GET OUTSIDE? MAYBE GET A LITTLE EXERCISE?

SOUNDS GREAT, I SAID. ANY CHANCE OF SOME DECENT SCENERY. SOMETHING OF A VIEW?

OH, THEY SAID. IT'LL TAKE YOUR BREATH AWAY.

SIGH.

DIRECTOR HILL...

PACKAGE DEPLOYED.

PACKAGE ON ITS WAY, STEVE.

BUT I GOTTA ASK, SHOULDN'T I FEEL A BIT GUILTY ABOUT JUST THROWING A GUY OFF THE SIDE OF A HELICARRIER?

HIS ALTERNATE-WORLD GENOCIDAL AVENGERS CAME HERE FROM AN EARTH THEY CONQUERED, MARIA.

NO, I DON'T FEEL BAD.

SYSTEM ARMED.

"IN FACT, I THINK THE ACTIONS OF OUR FRIENDS DOWN THERE ABSOLUTELY MERIT A RUN-IN WITH AN EMOTIONALLY NEUTERED, SOCIOPATH BANNER.

"MAKING THAT HAPPEN IS JUST A MATTER OF SIGNALING HIS IMPLANTED CONTROL NODE.

"AND I GOT NO PROBLEM FLIPPING THAT SWITCH."

"SYSTEM ACTIVATED."

WHOA.

YEAH. SEISMOLOGISTS ALL OVER THE PLANET ARE HAVING A FIELD DAY RIGHT NOW...

BUT IT'S THE BREATHER WE NEEDED. RETASK ALL AVAILABLE S.H.I.E.L.D. PERSONNEL TO HANDLE DA COSTA'S TEAM, WHILE WE--

FWASSHH!

WHAT THE--

HELLO, STEVE.

ANY CHANCE YOU MIGHT BE MORE OPEN TO ENDING THIS IF THE REQUEST CAME FROM AN OLD FRIEND?

OLD FRIENDS IS WHAT GOT US HERE, NATASHA.

AND THIS IS WHERE YOU RAN OFF TO?

TO JOIN UP WITH SOME OTHER SIDE?

THAT'S MY PROBLEM, STEVE. THERE REALLY AREN'T SIDES HERE AT ALL. IN FACT--

IN FACT NOTHING, NATASHA.

THERE ARE SIDES, AND THOSE PEOPLE DOWN THERE... THEY'RE ON THE WRONG ONE.

THIS ISN'T PETTY. THERE'S A POINT TO IT, AND YOU USED TO UNDERSTAND THAT.

WELL, IF WE CAN'T DO THIS THE EASY WAY...

BZZZT!

ROBERTO. CAPTAIN MARVEL'S RETURNED FROM LOW ORBIT...

I DON'T THINK THERE'S GOING TO BE A SOFT SOLUTION HERE.

ALL RIGHT...

LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE ON, SHANG.

HOW MANY 'YOUS' ARE YOU SENDING?

ALL OF THEM.

GETTING WORD OF SHANG CHI APPEARING ALL OVER THIS CARRIER. MULTIPLE SIGHTINGS, MULTIPLE DECKS.

WE'RE LOSING GROUND FAST. I'M GONNA PREP THE THING FOR THE THING I'M NOT SO HOT ABOUT...

COME ON, STEVE. IT DOESN'T HAVE TO END LIKE THIS.

END?

THIS DOESN'T END UNTIL THEY ANSWER FOR WHAT THEY'VE DONE, NATASHA.

IT DOESN'T WASH OFF. UNDERSTAND?

CAROL...

YEAH?

PLEASE KEEP THESE GOOD PEOPLE FROM GETTING IN THE WAY...

...AS OUR FIGHT'S NOT WITH THEM.

PSSTTT!

YOU HAVE THE BRIDGE.

I'M GONNA BE SICK. YOU SURE THIS IS GOING TO WORK?

MOBILE CONTROL UNIT IS ONLINE...

SENDING COMMAND.

"CATCH."

WHHUMP!

NOT GONNA LIE...

I COULD GET USED TO HAVING A FULL-TIME REMOTE-CONTROL HULK.

MIGHT MAKE DAYS LIKE THESE A LITTLE MORE INFREQUENT.

STEVE!

PLEASE! I'M BEGGING YOU. JUST LET US DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE. IT'S NOT TOO LATE...WE THINK THERE ARE STILL OPTIONS--THINGS WE HAVEN'T TRIED.

DON'T MAKE THIS ANY WORSE THAN IT ALREADY IS.

HRMPT!

YOU THERE, SAM?

YES.

OKAY.... READY TO LET THESE PEOPLE IN ON OUR LITTLE SECRET?

UH-HUH. ABOUT TIME.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE, HENRY? YOU PEOPLE AND YOUR BIG IDEAS.

YOU GOT PLANS...WELL, SO DO I.

CAPTAIN AMERICA

LUKE CAGE

WHITE TIGER

SHE-HULK

SPIDER-MAN

BLUE MARVEL

POWER MAN

SPECTRUM

THE PROLONGED OBJECT OF ANY PLAN IS NOT TO GET WHAT YOU WANT, BUT TO DISCOVER WHAT YOUR OPPONENT IS CAPABLE OF.

WHAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN IS GAUGING THEIR RESPONSE TO YOUR ACTIONS.

WHEN I SPOKE OF CHALLENGING A GIFTED OPPONENT'S PRIMARY HYPOTHESIS, I USED THE EXAMPLE OF DISRUPTING A CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO PARTIES--YOU AND THEM--BY INTRODUCING A THIRD GROUP...

YOUR OPPONENT'S RESPONSE TO THIS WILL INFORM YOUR NEXT ACTION.

FOR INSTANCE, LET US EXAMINE MY RECENT CONFLICT WITHIN THE MULTIFACETED AVENGERS MACHINE AS A TEST CASE FOR EFFECTIVE PLANNING.

STEVE ROGERS' RESPONSE TO THE THIRD-PARTY SCENARIO (THE AVENGERS WORLD TEAM) WAS THE INTRODUCTION OF AN ALT-UNIVERSE HULK ANALOG.

AN EFFECTIVE CHOICE. UNPREDICTABLE. UNEXPECTED.

BUT EVEN GIVEN THAT, IF THE HULK WOULD HAVE BEEN HIS SOLE RESPONSE, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A FUTILE EFFORT AS HE WOULD HAVE EXPOSED HIS TRUE INTENTIONS TOO EARLY FOR THE NUMBER OF VARIABLES AT PLAY.

BUT THIS IS STEVE ROGERS WE'RE TALKING ABOUT, VALERIA...SO IT WAS NOT.

THE HULK DID SERVE AS AN EXCELLENT BRANCHING SCENARIO, ENABLING CAPTAIN ROGERS TO HOLD DOWN TWO FRONTS (S.H.I.E.L.D. ENGAGED WITH THE AVENGERS WORLD, WHILE HE ENGAGED WITH US).

IN FACT, HAD HE NOT SUFFERED CONSIDERABLE LOSSES MAINTAINING A ZONE OF CONFLICT (PREVENTING US FROM AN EARLY TACTICAL RETREAT VIA TRANSLOCATOR), THE HULK GAMBIT MIGHT HAVE SUCCEEDED IN MAKING US INTRODUCE OUR ASSETS INTO THE FIELD EARLIER THAN DESIRED.

BUT HE DID SUFFER LOSSES, SO HE WAS FORCED TO INTRODUCE A FOURTH PARTY--HIS SECRET AVENGERS.

YOU!

IMMENSELY POWERFUL. TACTICALLY VARIED. AN EXCELLENT STRATEGEM, BUT UNFORTUNATELY FOR HIM, HIS LAST PIECE AVAILABLE ON THE BOARD.

IT'S OVER, RICHARDS!

TIME TO PAY!

HAVEN'T WE ALL PAID ENOUGH THIS TIME?

REMEMBER, AS I SAID EARLIER, THE OBJECT OF ANY PLAN IS NOT TO GET WHAT YOU WANT, BUT TO DISCOVER WHAT YOUR OPPONENT IS CAPABLE OF...

AND ONCE YOU KNOW THAT, YOU CAN MANIPULATE THE BOARD TO ENGINEER, AND MANAGE, A SUCCESSFUL ENDGAME.

WHAT IS...

OH, NO.

THE INVISIBLE WOMAN.

THAT'S RIGHT. DISAPPOINTING I'M SURE...

AND YOU MUST BE WONDERING HOW SHE PULLED IT OFF.

AS YOU PUT IN A LOT OF EFFORT. TRACKING DEVICES. DAILY SCANS...

YOU WERE SO CAREFUL.

BUT WE WERE EVEN MORE SO.

HERE SHE IS NOW.

IF YOU WANT, I'M SURE SHE'LL WALK YOU THROUGH EXACTLY HOW WE DID IT, BUT I'M GUESSING YOU'RE GOING TO BE MUCH MORE INTERESTED IN EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.

THE THING ABOUT ENDGAMES IS THIS...

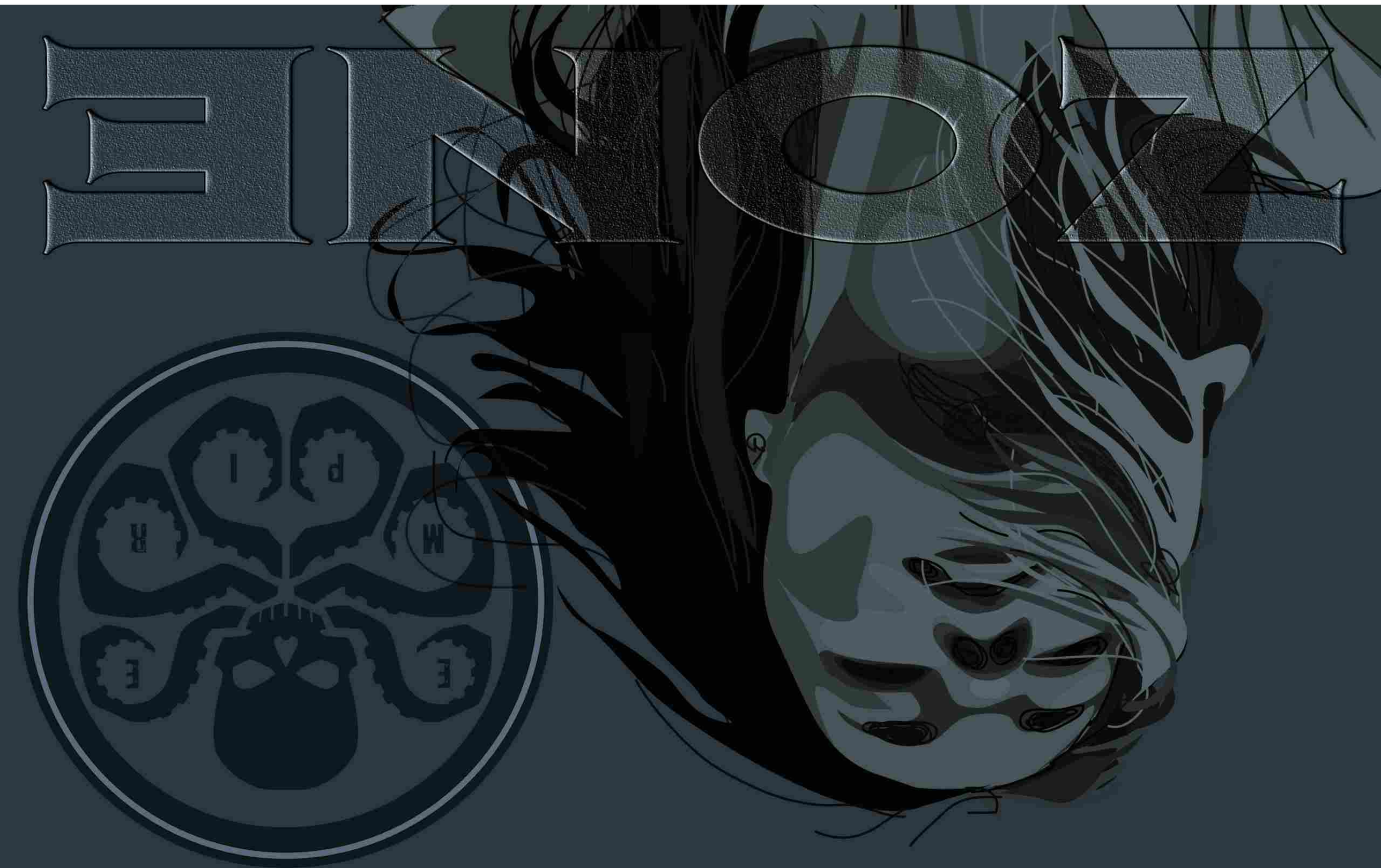
IT'S REALLY TWO STRATEGIES IN ONE.

FIRST, YOU SHOW THEM WHAT THEY GUESSED MIGHT HAVE BEEN COMING.

AND THEN...

YOU SHOW THEM WHAT THEY DIDN'T.

NEW AVENGERS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